

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

1844

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Chairman Genachowski:

We recently received the attached letter from a constituent who represents TV translator stations in Utah. These translators provide free over-the-air television to rural communities throughout Utah – an invaluable service to those who might not have access to, or be able to afford cable or satellite television service.

We understand and support the goal of expanding broadband access to more communities across the nation, and are committed to working with you as you move forward with plans for an incentive auction. At the same time, we need to make sure that rural communities in Utah and throughout the country are not left behind in this process of spectrum re-allocation.

In that spirit, we ask that you review the attached letter and respond to the concerns raised therein.

Specifically we ask that you please answer the following questions:

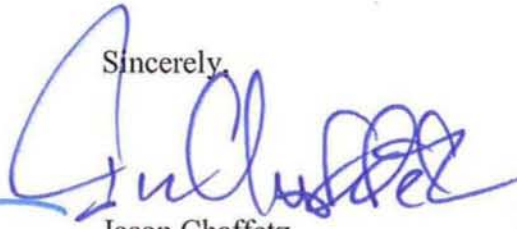
1. How will the spectrum re-allocation and resulting reduction in channels impact Utahns who currently utilize over-the-air television provided by translator stations?
2. Is the spectrum re-allocation and resulting reduction in channels likely to lead to many of the translator stations in Utah no longer remaining in operation?
3. If many of the translator stations in Utah no longer remain in operation after the spectrum re-allocation takes place will free over-the-air television continue to be an option for rural residents who had been served by one of these translator stations, or will they be forced to either pay for subscription television service or go without?
4. What provisions is the FCC prepared to make to ensure that free over-the-air television continues to be available to residents of rural communities in Utah and throughout the nation at the completion of this spectrum re-allocation process?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Bishop", with a stylized, flowing script.

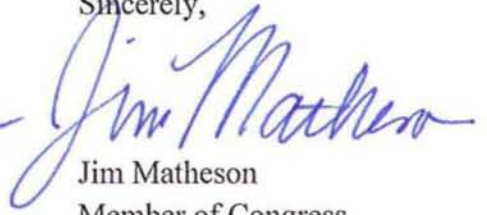
Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Chaffetz", with a stylized, flowing script.

Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Matheson", with a stylized, flowing script.

Jim Matheson
Member of Congress

STATE OF UTAH TV TRANSLATOR COORDINATER

R. Kent Parsons

Monroe, Utah 84754-0163

Home Phone 435-527-3566 Cell-Phone 435-201-2104

**Congressman Jason Chaffetz
1032 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515**

November 1, 2010

Re:

Threat of Losing Free-Over-the-Air Television to American Viewers

Honorable Chaffetz,

President Obama has directed the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission to consider removing channels 32 to 51 from our current existing FCC channel 14 to 51 Television Broadcast Authorization. If enacted, this would result in total devastation to not only the off-air TV reception to urban areas but would also cause disruption to Off-Air Viewers nation wide. According to FCC records there are over 4,500 TV translator stations presently providing free-over-the-air television throughout the nation to rural communities. If the recommended channel repacking were to become a reality, many of these stations would no longer remain in operation thus mandating the viewers to subscribe to either cable or satellite programming. Utah has over 625 of the above-mentioned TV translator/ repeaters in the nation and the impact to rural viewers in our state would be left to either pay for subscription TV service or go without.

HISTORY:

The name "Translator" was selected by the Federal Communications Commission in 1955 for this service and relates to the rebroadcast of a primary TV station channel to a different output channel. This new service was designated "Secondary Service" to a full power TV primary station only. Sevier County has used translators to distribute TV signals to all residents of our county since 1957. Through many commercial lobbying efforts, our "Secondary Status" has been reduced to being secondary to about any other Communications service. Many people through the years have confused this term as translating a language.

When Congress directed the FCC to change analog broadcasting to digital in 1997, they were also concerned that many people who relied on over-the-air reception would possibly not be able to buy new digital TV sets and would be left with no local programming.

24 Rural Utah counties then collectively began working together, beginning in 1998, to develop a Utah Master Plan that would better prepare our Rural people for the transition from their old analog service to the new digital service by using TV translator/repeater stations. The goal was for all rural people in Utah to be included in receiving the new digital TV signals with free-over-the-air television through our 100 existing TV translator sites that have been developed over the years by these same Utah counties (See: exhibit #1). This plan was reviewed by Governor Leavitt and was approved with his signature September 14, 1998.

[In the House of Representatives, Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton of Texas first announced a plan for a converter box subsidy in March 2005. Congress eventually developed and funded the coupon program at \$1.5 Billion Dollars.] All this funding was through the Department of Commerce with the NTIA administering the program.

The following NTIA public notice was then posted:

[The Low Power Television and Translator Assistance Programs include the Low-Power TV and Translator Digital-to-Analog Conversion (Conversion) Program and the Low-Power TV and Translator Upgrade (Upgrade) Program. The Conversion Program provide funds to assist low-power TV broadcast stations, Class A television stations, television translator stations, and television booster stations ("low-power facilities") to broadcast in analog after the February 17, 2009 digital conversion deadline for full power television stations. **The Upgrade Program will reimburse the costs to upgrade these types of facilities in rural communities to digital transmission.**]

Part of the funding was appropriated for LPTV and TV translator stations to help them buy new equipment for the transition to digital operation.

A second NTIA public notice was later posted:

[On 05/12/2009 NTIA announced the start of the **Low Power TV and Translator Digital Upgrade** Program to reimburse licensees of analog low-power television eligible stations for eligible costs associated with the upgrade of their analog facilities to digital broadcast capacity. Eligible rural stations must be on the air with a licensed digital signal in order to apply.] Because the CIB State money was in operation and the digital channels were on the air, a significant amount of the CIB State money has been reclaimed from the NTIA at the present time and has been forwarded to the eligible counties because they hold the licenses.

Our goal has been achieved through cooperation of our counties, the FCC and the State of Utah. The State has funded nearly \$9,000,000 through four CIB grants since 2005. The grant money obtained was for the purchase of new equipment capable and compatible for DTV operation for these 24 counties that rely on TV translator signals. **All communities within our plan now have some access to subscription-free high quality HDTV.**

Therefore, it can easily be seen the broadcasting industry has continually been encouraged by elected officials and the FCC through all these years to continue to progress in supplying the general public with free-over-air digital television broadcast signals. It is ironic that a previous administration appropriated the needed revenue subsidies so rural viewers would be included in the transition to digital operation and the present administration wants to reclaim much of the needed broadcast spectrum, thus jeopardizing free-over-the-air television service to both urban and rural communities. **It would be impossible to continue these rural DTV Translator services if the proposed block of TV channels were reclaimed by the FCC and would certainly deliver a negative local economic impact to the counties.**

Example: Sevier County has a population of some 10,000 households and if each family were to pay for television, approximately \$500,000 per month would leave the county and add to the already economic problems we are now facing. Only a miniscule amount of cable or satellite dollars remain in the county with the rest leaving and going to the owners of the subscription services.

Broadcasters are required by the FCC to participate in the National Emergency Alert System (EAS) and are also required to make regular tests to assure their systems are always ready to broadcast any local warnings of flood conditions, high wind warnings, bad road conditions, etc.

These warnings are automatically retransmitted through TV translator stations to also alert rural viewers. Closed Caption for the Deaf is also a mandatory requirement of primary broadcast stations and automatically passes through TV translators to rural viewers. If these viewers do not have access to any local free-over-the-air broadcast signals these people proceed without warnings or closed captioning for the deaf.

Counties in Utah are presently licensed with the FCC for 642 digital TV translators (35%) of the nations digital TV translator licenses, due to our planning and hard work with the FCC. An additional 155 applications are waiting for final approval at the FCC and when they are awarded, additional digital channels will be available to the remaining few underserved rural Utah communities.

Also, the FCC recently passed rule making to allow any one to operate unlicensed signals on unused channels (white spaces) within our present TV bands while TV translator stations are still required to be licensed in these same bands by the FCC. There is no question that these unlicensed devices will cause interference to existing digital television services nationwide regardless of the biased studies made by the FCC using only geographic methods of identifying the unused channels and not mandating signal sensing receivers on the unlicensed devices; many TV translator viewers possibly will be vulnerable with unacceptable interference because they receive their home signals far beyond the FCC protected contours.

Fiber optics or the use of the VHF spectrum possibly could be used instead of taking our needed UHF TV spectrum to provide this service to areas that are in real need of broadband service.

Exactly where is this so called Broadband Service really needed?

Conclusions:

The present administration currently has instructed the FCC to take back most of the needed UHF broadcast spectrum from the free television broadcasting industry for the purpose of Commercial Broadband to the general public. I understand it is their plan to auction channels 32 to 51 to acquire the needed revenue to allow commercial operators to utilize that part of the television band without consideration of the loss of TV free-off-air services to Rural America.

It is imperative this must not happen and we solicit your help to discourage the FCC from taking channels 32 to 51 from our existing TV translator allocations.

Respectfully,

R. Kent Parsons E-mail: kp@altazip.com
State of Utah TV translator Coordinator

cc:

Utah Senators

Orrin Hatch
E-mail: hatch.senate.gov/

Bob Bennett
E-mail: bennett.senate.gov/

Utah Congressmen

Jim Matheson
E-mail: matheson.house.gov/

Rob Bishop
E-mail: robbishop.house.gov/

Utah Governor

Gary Herbert
E-mail: utah.gov/governor/

COVERAGE AND SECTORS

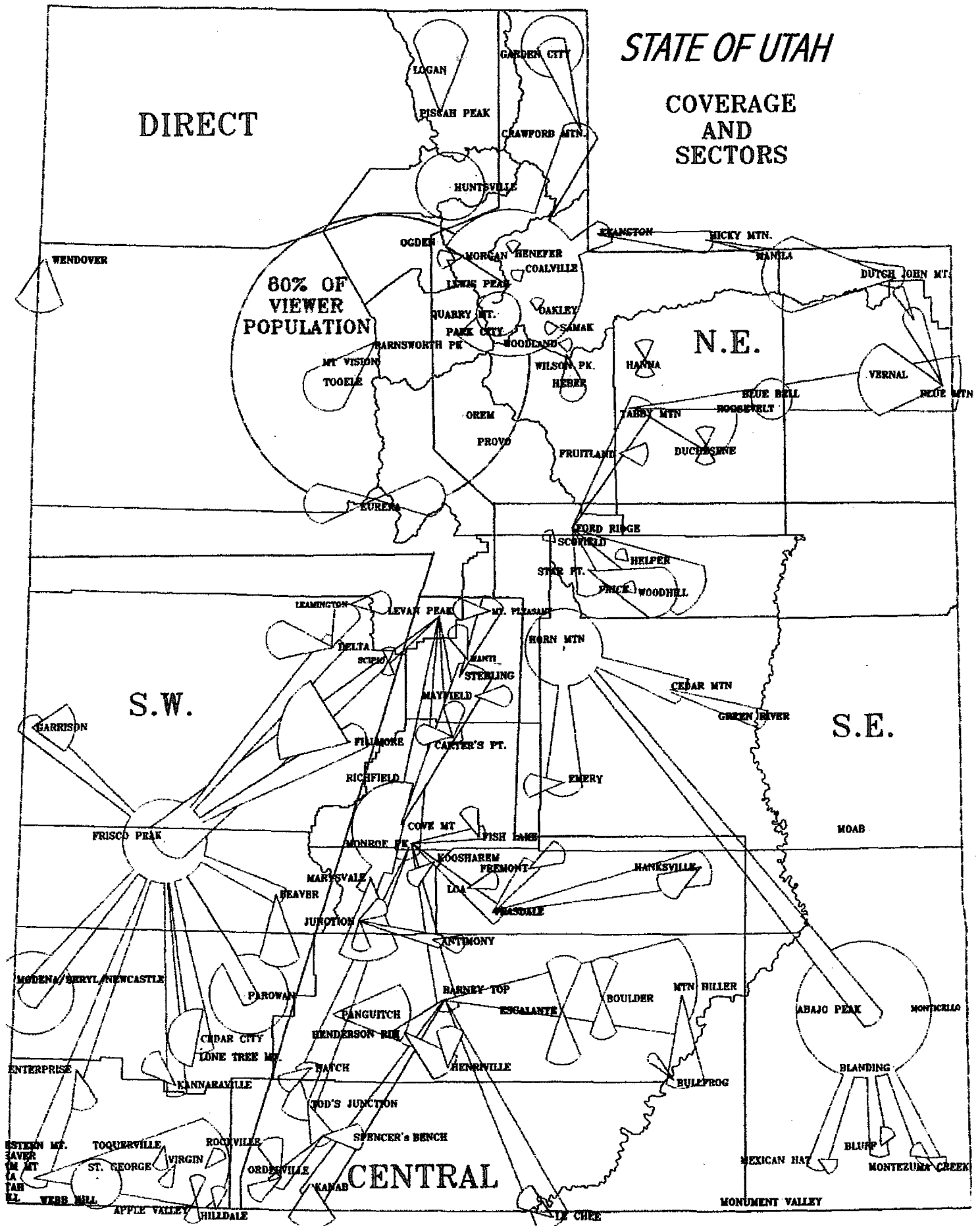
80% OF
VIEWER
POPULATION

N.E.

S.W.

S.E.

CENTRAL





OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

March 29, 2011

The Honorable Jim Matheson
U.S. House of Representatives
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Matheson:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to expand broadband access throughout the nation and your support for incentive auctions. I also understand and appreciate your concerns regarding the potential impact of expanding mobile broadband opportunities in the broadcast television bands on TV translator stations in Utah. Translators provide an important and valuable service to many Americans living in rural areas, and I am committed to preserving free, over-the-air television for viewers throughout Utah and across the nation.

The Commission is in the preliminary stages of reviewing how it could structure an incentive auction in the broadcast TV bands if Congress grants it the authority. This review includes evaluating the potential impact on translators that provide service to otherwise unserved areas. We are aware of the unique circumstances presented in Utah and will work closely with local broadcasters to ensure that any restructuring of the TV bands accounts for the need to preserve free, over-the-air television service across the State. Our goal is to provide new and exciting opportunities for mobile broadband while protecting viewers currently relying on over-the-air TV. I am confident that we will succeed in that effort.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and look forward to engaging with you on this important topic in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

March 29, 2011

The Honorable Rob Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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WASHINGTON

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THE CHAIRMAN

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U.S. House of Representatives
1032 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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